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New York

Chairman: Mr. Garcia . . . . . (Colombia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

General exchange of views (*continued*)

Mr. Rider (New Zealand): Let me begin, Mr. Chairman, by congratulating you and your colleagues in the Bureau on your election to office this year in the Disarmament Commission. We are confident that the Commission is in good hands and look forward to working with you on the items on our agenda.

In these opening remarks I just want to make a few very general comments on those agenda items, in advance of the more detailed views New Zealand will be offering in the various Working Groups.

First, on the question of nuclear-weapon-free zones: for New Zealand, and indeed for the whole of the South Pacific, the signature of the Protocols to the Treaty of Rarotonga by France, the United States and the United Kingdom in March 1996 was most welcome. It was the culmination of 10 years of effort, and meant that our region was finally free of nuclear weapons.

The signature of the Rarotonga Protocols is only one of a number of recent developments which demonstrate that nuclear-weapon-free zones now have real momentum. In April 1996 in Cairo the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty was opened for signature. The 10 countries of South-East Asia have ratified the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon Free Zone. And important steps have been taken to consolidate the Treaty of Tlatelolco.

These developments, as well as the increasing attention to establishing zones in the Middle East and in Central Asia, reflect acknowledgment of and support for nuclear-weapon-free zones as a means of expressing and promoting commonly held values in the areas of nuclear disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation. At the same time, nuclear-weapon-free zones can assist in building regional confidence and security. Each treaty is unique, reflecting the needs of the region concerned. More stringent requirements than those accepted under global regimes such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) can be included in individual treaties.

These are developments which give New Zealand, a long-time proponent of nuclear-weapon-free zones, great satisfaction. Taken together, the four existing and prospective zones potentially include some 114 nations. With the addition of Antarctica, demilitarized under the Antarctic Treaty, they cover more than 50 per cent of the Earth's land mass. Virtually all of the southern hemisphere, and significant parts of the northern hemisphere, are now covered by nuclear-weapon-free zones.

Like a number of other Governments, New Zealand sees potential to build on this in a way which reinforces progress towards nuclear disarmament. The differing provisions of each treaty may make the creation of formal legal linkages complex and difficult, but we see scope for developing political links between the four existing or potential nuclear-weapon-free zones. New Zealand therefore welcomed and actively supported the initiative Brazil took in New York at the fifty-first session of the

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General Assembly to promote linkages and cooperation between the nuclear-weapon-free zones through a General Assembly resolution. We saw this as an important first step which should lead to increased links and cooperation between nuclear-weapon-free zones. New Zealand, both nationally and with like-minded colleagues, is ready to propose for this Commission's consideration further steps to achieve that goal.

Secondly, I turn to the item on a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, consideration of which will take place against the background of General Assembly resolution 51/45 C. In that resolution, the decision to convene a Preparatory Committee was made subject to the outcome of deliberations at this session of our Commission. The question now is whether a consensus on the objectives and agenda for the special session can be reached over the next two and a half weeks in the Disarmament Commission and at the meetings of the Preparatory Committee, so that the decision to hold the special session in 1999 can be confirmed.

We hope that this can be achieved. New Zealand does not see it as in the interests of the overall disarmament and arms control agenda for any country to stand in the way of a special session which could provide an efficient structure for disarmament efforts as we move into the twenty-first century. Over the next weeks, therefore, we need to build upon the welcome signs of flexibility which were shown by so many delegations last year during the fifty-first session of the General Assembly.

Crucial to that is a demonstration that the special session will deliver a substantive and balanced outcome. We do not see this as being an insuperable obstacle. In the working paper New Zealand submitted last year (A/CN.10/1996/WG.II/WP.5) we set out our views on the objectives of a fourth special session on disarmament, and a possible draft agenda, which included both nuclear and conventional items, and the disarmament negotiating machinery. Such a holistic approach is, we believe, necessary if the special session is to develop practical programmes on which nations can draw to assist their own disarmament efforts.

The third item, on guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, is one of considerable significance, particularly in terms of its emphasis on the consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures. We see this item as a logical progression from the discussions in previous years on illicit arms transfers. The Disarmament Commission then noted that the negative effect of this traffic was disproportionately large, and that the trade should be eliminated.

Efforts to that end begin at the national level. New Zealand, for example, participates in the Wassenaar Arrangement, and implements national controls on strategic exports, including small arms. Coordination between States, at both the global and the regional levels, is also crucial. One way in which this can happen is for regional organizations to look at ways in which they can support global disarmament regimes, as mandated by the Secretary-General's "An Agenda for Peace". New Zealand has given its encouragement to discussions along these lines in the context of the Regional Forum of the Association of South-East Asian Nations. And at the global level there is a need for Security Council mandates for peacekeeping operations to provide guidance on activities, such as demining, which contribute to the consolidation of peace.

New Zealand supports a coordinated approach to these problems. We think there is a valuable role for the Disarmament Commission to play in considering the broader framework for the implementation of these and other sorts of practical disarmament measures. Through our deliberations here in this Commission we can improve the capacity of the international community to ensure the maintenance and consolidation of peace and security in areas that have suffered long from conflicts.

We look forward to a substantive, and hopefully positive, discussion on all those agenda issues at this session.

Mr. Enkhsaikhan (Mongolia): I would like to begin, Sir, by extending to you our warmest congratulations on your well deserved election as Chairman of the Disarmament Commission. My delegation is confident that the Commission will successfully cope with the tasks before it, benefitting from your rich knowledge and experience in disarmament affairs. My felicitations go also to the other members of the Bureau, as well as to the chairman of Working Group III. It is in the Working Groups that the bulk of the Commission's work is to be carried out.

The Mongolian delegation welcomes the adoption of the agenda for the current session, which includes important topical items. We look forward to their serious and business-like consideration, which would contribute to disarmament efforts. This would be in conformity with

the role the Disarmament Commission is called upon to play,

> "as the specialized, deliberative body within the United Nations multilateral disarmament machinery that allows for in-depth deliberations on specific disarmament issues, leading to the submission of concrete recommendations on those issues". *(resolution 51/47 B, para. 6)*

It is no coincidence that the Disarmament Commission has on its agenda the consideration of the question of nuclear-weapon-free zones, since the importance of such zones is increasing concurrently with the increase of the areas of their actual and potential zones of coverage.

Mongolia welcomes the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones in various parts of the world, as well as the ongoing efforts to establish new ones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region or subregion concerned. We also support the creation of additional nuclear-weapon-free zones wherever necessary and feasible. In this regard, we believe that, given the region's importance for overall peace and security, the Middle East should be turned into such a zone, in accordance with the interest of the overwhelming majority of the members of the international community.

As a State situated in the heart of Asia, and bearing in mind the subregion's strategic location, Mongolia has been making efforts to promote the creation of such a zone in Central Asia. The consultations that Mongolia undertook together with Kyrgyzstan during the last session of the General Assembly demonstrated that this idea is finding support within the United Nations community and that further consultations are needed, especially with the nuclear-weapon States. We are pleased that those who were somehow hesitant last year are now embracing the idea and even wholeheartedly pushing the initiative. Mongolia is prepared to work closely with these and other interested States to materialize the idea.

The Twelfth Ministerial Conference of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries in New Delhi recently declared its support for Mongolia's efforts, as declared in 1992, to institutionalize its status as a nuclear-weapon-free zone.

Our initiative was welcomed and supported by all five nuclear-weapon States, including Mongolia's two neighbouring nuclear powers, China and Russia. It has also been welcomed by the entire membership of the Non-Aligned Movement, some Western European States, Japan and others. This overwhelming support shows that the notion of a single-State zone is not only politically possible but also quite acceptable.

By declaring its vast territory of 1.565 million square kilometres a nuclear-weapon-free zone, Mongolia is not only trying to ensure its security by political means, but it is also making its policy clear and predictable, thus contributing to reinforcing stability in its strategically sensitive and delicate region.

The assurances given by the five nuclear-weapon States to Mongolia are in themselves an expression of support for the concept of a single-State zone. Nevertheless, to be credible the zone cannot be based only on unilateral declarations of support, especially when they are not identical, contain different language and contain different conditions and reservations. Also, unlike legally binding commitments, unilateral declarations are susceptible to changes of heart or of mind. A nuclear-weapon-free zone can be credible only when it has a sound legal basis and when parties to the agreement have legally defined rights and obligations.

Compared to existing zones, the single-State zone has its obvious advantages: the geographical scope of the zone is a priori well-defined; there is also no need for intra-zonal negotiations or coordination; the parties responsible are apparent; and so on. An essential element is that the zonal State should not have any territorial or border issues with its neighbours. However well-intentioned they may be, it is very important for such zones, just as for any other zones, to have the acquiescence, if not the support, of nuclear-weapon and neighbouring States. As to the form, the international agreement itself could incorporate the negative and positive security assurances and the commitment of nuclear-weapon States not to contribute to or connive in any act that would in fact violate the status of the zone.

These elements could form the basis of the guidelines for drawing the legal framework of single-State zones. The working group that we established yesterday to consider the item could, in our view, consider this question at its meetings and perhaps come up with some ideas, general guidelines or even recommendations for the General Assembly on this question, as envisaged in paragraphs 6 and 7 of its resolution 51/47 B. With this in mind, my delegation intends to submit a working paper for the Working Group's consideration.

Turning to other items on the agenda, I would like to underline that Mongolia fully supports the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV). Its position on SSOD IV has been generally reflected in the statements of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) on the subject. Nevertheless, my delegation would like to make a few observations.

We believe that SSOD IV can be convened in 1999, as suggested by the overwhelming majority of the Member States. It seems that the suggested timing takes into account other major disarmament agendas that are envisaged. It is to be hoped that, given the short time left, all delegations will work constructively towards attaining consensus on this item in order to allow preparations for the special session to commence this year.

In the view of my delegation, the objectives of SSOD IV should include, *inter alia*, the following.

First, it should include an assessment of the present situation in the field of disarmament. It is important to take into account the post-cold-war situation and the clear need for a different approach towards security.

Secondly, it should include the reaffirmation of the central role of the United Nations in the multilateral disarmament process.

Thirdly, it should include the setting of the disarmament agenda for the twenty-first century. Charting a framework for future disarmament measures should be the most important part of the whole undertaking. It is important to come to a general agreement on a phased programme for the reduction and eventual elimination of nuclear-weapon stockpiles. The special session can provide a valuable stimulus to further measures in the reduction of conventional weapons and in developing confidence-building measures.

I would like to note here that my delegation does not view the special session only in the context of nuclear disarmament. It should be emphasized, however, that further significant progress in conventional disarmament is possible only in the context of nuclear disarmament. In this connection, we fully share the view that its agenda should be balanced between nuclear and conventional disarmament issues.

The special session will certainly have financial implications for the United Nations. We are afraid, however, that a reference to that might not be comprehended, especially by the world public, given the astronomical sums being spent on armaments. The convening of SSOD IV will be meaningful only if all States commit themselves to its success.

Conventional arms control constitutes an indispensable part of disarmament efforts and is highly important in promoting regional and international peace and security. In the view of my delegation, its role is bound to increase in the post-cold-war security environment.

The Mongolian delegation considers the main objective of conventional arms control and reduction to be to help States set the balance of their defence capabilities at the lowest level of armaments. Micro-disarmament can lead to, and be complemented by, practical disarmament measures, such as control and disposal of arms, especially small arms and light weapons, restraints over their production, procurement and transfer, conversion, and other measures relating to confidence-building. The adoption last year of the "Guidelines for international arms transfers in the context of General Assembly resolution 46/36 H, of 6 December 1991", was a commendable development. The continued operation of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, and the improvement of its effectiveness, would be important practical steps conducive to conventional disarmament.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to emphasize that conventional arms control and disarmament can be truly effective if they address the root causes of instability and serve the interests of development. We hope that consideration of this new item in this Commission will lead to practical disarmament measures and thus strengthen regional and global stability.

Mr. Izquierdo (Ecuador) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I should like at the outset to express to you, Sir, the sincere congratulations of my delegation on your election as Chairman of the Disarmament Commission for this substantive session, and to assure your of our readiness to cooperate with you in making your stewardship a success. We also congratulate all the members of the Bureau. Through you, my delegation would also like to congratulate Ambassador Hoffmann for the magnificent job he did in directing the work of the Commission last year.

Ecuador firmly supports the non-proliferation regime and the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones. That is why we were among those who led the drive to bring

about the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which served as an example to ensure that other areas could be free from the threat of these weapons. We should like to express our satisfaction at the recent celebration of the thirtieth anniversary of the opening for signature of this important international instrument.

Ecuador would like to place on record its support for General Assembly resolution 51/45 B, entitled "The nuclear-weapon-free southern hemisphere and adjacent areas", introduced by Brazil, which, in essence, calls for the consolidation of the regime established across an extensive area of the world by the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok, Pelindaba and the Antarctic. The objectives of that resolution deserve the consensus support of the international community. My delegation would like to reaffirm the importance of those Treaties, and we have consequently supported the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in other regions.

Ecuador supports the holding of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament in 1999, as agreed. To this end, all delegations must allow practical progress to be made in deliberations in order to ensure the success of the session. For this reason, Ecuador is especially eager to ensure that the agenda will deal, in a relevant way, with the issues related to conventional disarmament, and that they are thoroughly developed.

My delegation wishes to support the proposals put forward in this regard by the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries at the last substantive session of the Disarmament Commission, which called for the special session to have a wide-ranging agenda highlighting the following: review and evaluation of the current international situation; nuclear disarmament at the global and regional levels; elimination of other weapons of mass destruction; effective reduction of arms and armed forces; the relationship between disarmament and development; and confidence-building.

My delegation attaches the highest priority to the need for the United Nations to deal in a more extensive and responsible manner with the issue of conventional weapons. We are thus very satisfied at the Disarmament Commission's decision to include a new item on its agenda, entitled "Guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N". This exercise must produce results that have a practical impact on conflict resolution and the consolidation of peace.

The question of anti-personnel mines in all its aspects, including demining, must be of interest to all States, mainly because of its humanitarian implications. States that produce and export anti-personnel mines have a greater degree of responsibility, as they have derived huge economic benefits from their sale. Furthermore, the companies involved in this business possess necessary the technology and human resources for demining.

In this context, Ecuador regrets that there are situations involving aggression by one or more States against other States, compelling the parties that are attacked to use what methods are available to defend their sovereignty and territorial integrity, in accordance with Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, relating to the right to legitimate self-defence. It is therefore indispensable for all sides to recognize their responsibility and cooperate in the work of removing these devices so as to prevent them from taking their toll, especially on civilian populations not involved in armed conflict. Ecuador is a contracting party to all the international instruments that prohibit and restrict the use of these weapons. We are in favour of achieving a total ban on the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of anti-personnel landmines. In this connection, in 1995 Ecuador declared a moratorium on the transfer of such weapons.

The delegation of Ecuador attaches the highest priority to all the norms of international humanitarian law, including those that inspired the conclusion of the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, as well as its Protocols. Ecuador is a contracting party to all of those instruments.

My country has steadfastly promoted general and complete disarmament, and is consequently a party to all global and regional disarmament instruments. We believe that a greater level of transparency will contribute to building confidence and security between States. Ecuador invites all States to participate effectively in the implementation of all measures designed to achieve disarmament, not on the basis of declarations, but through tangible actions and objectives. Only a genuine pro-disarmament attitude will contribute to achieving the objectives of the so-called consolidation of peace through the adoption of concrete disarmament measures.

Ecuador is greatly concerned by the continued tendencies and actions relating to the acquisition and unjustified accumulation of armaments, which threaten

international security and jeopardize the processes of peace, dialogue and negotiation. The international community must remain alert and take action to deal with this. In this regard, my country attaches particular importance the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and has presented reports on the subject.

The quest for the peaceful resolution of disputes through dialogue and negotiation is a mainstay of the foreign policy of Ecuador. We are therefore strongly opposed to the threat, direct or veiled, of the use of force in international relations. My country is convinced that it is more important to achieve development for the people than to accumulate conventional arms on an unjustifiable basis. That is why we are committed to devoting our economic resources to resolving social problems and achieving sustainable human development.

There is a very close link between peace, collective security, integrated development and international law, all of which are essential components of a stable international order. No one will be able to feel safe and secure if dialogue and negotiation do not once and for all replace confrontation and war, or if the potential for the development of peoples is thwarted, threatening their stability and democracy. Peaceful coexistence is therefore an imperative necessity in international relations.

Mr. Vachon (Canada) (*interpretation from French*): On behalf of the Canadian delegation, Sir, I should like to congratulate you on your assumption of the chairmanship of the Commission and to assure you of our full support. I should like also to welcome the elected Chairman of the Working Group, as I shall also welcome those still to be appointed. They too will have our confidence and our cooperation.

The agenda before us is both varied and interesting, embracing complex issues, and the Canadian delegation looks forward to contributing to the discussion in each area. If we approach this deliberative forum in a spirit of dialogue and work towards common ground, it will afford us the opportunity to explore different perspectives rather than holding on to immovable national positions.

(*spoke in English*)

With regard to nuclear-weapon-free zones, it is propitious that we are embarking upon such a discussion in this body in this, the thirtieth anniversary year of the Treaty of Tlatelolco. That example has justifiably earned credit for those who had the foresight to take such an important matter into their own hands.

Canada has already availed itself of the opportunity to speak on the issue of nuclear-weapon-free zones during the recent Preparatory Committee session on the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT); but it is our view, given the fact that the NPT does not yet enjoy universal membership, that some of these thoughts bear repeating in this forum. Canada welcomes and encourages progress to develop and implement nuclear-weapon-free-zone agreements consistent with the Charter of the United Nations, international law and internationally agreed criteria. The establishment of additional nuclear-weapon-free zones, on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States concerned, particularly in regions beset by conflicts, enhances regional and global peace and security and contributes to non-proliferation and disarmament. We also encourage adherence by the nuclear-weapon States to nuclear-weapon-free-zone arrangements.

Canada supports the countries of Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the South Pacific in concluding various nuclear-weapon-free-zone treaties. Of course, we welcome the support of the nuclear-weapon States that have signed the relevant protocols. We also welcome the consensus in the General Assembly on an annual resolution urging the "Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East". We would be remiss were we not also to highlight the progress made in South-East Asia in this context, as represented by the Bangkok Treaty.

The prospects for regional initiatives, in keeping with international law and internationally agreed criteria, have clearly not been exhausted. For example, we note with interest the signing of the Almaty Declaration — adopted by the leaders of Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan — which calls for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. Canada joins with others in welcoming such initiatives.

We look forward to hearing of the experiences of others, and we believe that we should remain open-minded and be prepared to consider any new concepts which might emerge to advance this broad concept. It is, of course, clear that any such proposals should continue to meet the basic criteria of acceptability to the countries of the region and promotion of regional and international security. To help promote this discussion, my delegation

will distribute a paper entitled "Nuclear-weapon-free zones: A comparative perspective". Perhaps somewhat wide-ranging, it does not necessarily reflect Canada's national position. We are hopeful that it will help enrich our deliberations.

We have an equally open mind in addressing the agenda item on the United Nations special session devoted to disarmament. In particular, we maintain that these deliberations should point the way to an appropriate framework and balanced agenda that would attract consensus. This is necessary if we are to convene a special session that can make a meaningful contribution to the world's work on disarmament, as envisaged in the relevant General Assembly resolution. It is in this working group that we plan to distribute a second paper of a more general nature, entitled "Criteria for evaluating potential agreements or measures to control arms and promote stability". We do believe that it may have a wider interest, however, including in the two other subject areas on our agenda.

On the topic of consolidation of peace, we very much appreciate the preparatory work that has been done, particularly by the German delegation, with a view to focusing our efforts. We should not be surprised that our work will likely intersect in some instances with certain aspects of what is already under consideration — for example, in the United Nations Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms. The broadening of our agenda becomes clear in this topic, and in our discussions we should ensure that we remain open and sensitive to the important work being done in other areas of the United Nations and in regional organizations. My delegation will distribute a third paper, dedicated to this topic, later in this session. I look forward to having the opportunity to introduce it in the Working Group at that time.

The Commission can count on the support and practical contribution of my delegation.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): My delegation is pleased to see you, Sir, chairing this important session of the Disarmament Commission. Our warmest congratulations go to you and to the other members of the Bureau.

We are living through a time of change and challenge. The end of ideological antagonisms has had a salutary impact on the international security environment. The present time is thus more propitious than any in the past for addressing, in substance, security and disarmament issues. This lends importance and also a sense of urgency to the task that lies ahead of us and is reflected in this session's agenda.

We have before us an agenda of three substantive items, of which two are new, and we would like to share our general thoughts on these three agenda items. Bangladesh believes that recent developments on nuclear-weapon-free zones are significant and will have far-reaching consequences in strengthening nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. The recent celebration of the thirtieth anniversary of the Treaty of Tlatelolco is testimony of the commitment of the signatory Member States to a nuclear-weapon-free zone. In March 1996 we noted that the United Kingdom, the United States and France signed the Treaty of Rarotonga. In April 1996 we witnessed the signing of the Pelindaba Treaty by over 40 African countries, and the signing of its Protocols by all the nuclear-weapon States.

We also witnessed the Treaty of Bangkok on the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone enter into force last month. Bangladesh stands in admiration of these positive developments. Bangladesh has more than once reiterated its policy of commitment to the concept and principle of nuclear-weapon-free zones and zones of peace. The total elimination of nuclear weapons is our professed goal. It is our view that nuclear-weapon-free zones can supplement global efforts towards our ultimate objective of a world free from all nuclear threats.

The agenda item on guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament calls for serious deliberations at this session. We have noted that weapons of mass destruction naturally received more attention in public forums than did so-called conventional arms. And yet, excessive accumulations of such arms, not commensurate with the legitimate security concerns of a country, can also be a major destabilizing factor. Many millions of casualties in wars and conflicts have, since 1945, been caused by conventional weapons. It has often been expressed that developing countries in particular should exercise utmost restraint in respect of defence expenditures so as to ensure that procurement does not exceed legitimate security requirements. We are not encouraged when we find that, in 1996, military expenditure as a share of gross domestic product stayed constant for most countries of the world. Economy in the defence sector would mean more funds for the development sector. However, such a prescription, to be effective and realistic, should impose restrictions and constraints on arms-exporting countries. It is perhaps not realistic to expect producers not to manufacture what they

can profitably sell and also not to consolidate markets through persuasion and liberal incentives.

The agenda item on the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament has been a bone of contention in earlier sessions of this Commission. Bangladesh believes that the fourth special session needs to be held to cover the whole range of disarmament issues, aiming for a balance between those related to nuclear weapons and conventional arms. Such a session will indeed help the establishment of common understanding leading to further progress in all disarmament issues. Budgetary constraints notwithstanding, Bangladesh believes that such a session could be useful in furthering the cause of total and complete disarmament. This session would, hopefully, focus on the issue of dates and agenda items and successfully arrive at a much-desired consensus through the cooperation of all concerned.

Bangladesh believes that the Disarmament Commission, in its deliberations in the coming days, will live up to the expectations of all of us. Bangladesh will extend its unstinting support to you, Sir, in your efforts for the success of the 1997 substantive session.

Before I conclude, my delegation would like to inform the Commission that we have just received the good news that the cabinet of the Government of Bangladesh last night ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Mr. Mekprayoonthong (Thailand): First of all, allow me, on behalf of my delegation, to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as the Chairman of the Disarmament Commission at its 1997 session. I also wish to extend my congratulations to the other members of the Bureau. Let me assure you of the full support of the delegation of Thailand during the deliberations under your guidance this session.

This year, the Disarmament Commission began its annual meeting at a very appropriate time, when the issues of arms controls and disarmament have captured worldwide interest. Late last year, we witnessed the conclusion and adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Just last week, the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) concluded the first meeting of the Preparatory Committee of the 2000 Review Conference. In one week's time, the Chemical Weapons Convention will enter into force. My delegation hopes that, during this current session of the Disarmament Commission, member States will work together to fulfil the important role of the Commission as a forum for taking stock, exchanging views and making recommendations on disarmament issues.

Disarmament is a wide-ranging area to cover. Thailand believes that every country can contribute towards disarmament to make the world a safer and better place to live in. As the depository country of the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, Thailand feels it is obliged to make this brief statement on this particular issue, as our contribution to the Commission.

The establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone has been commonly accepted as a significant contribution towards the ultimate objective of achieving a world entirely free of nuclear weapons. On 15 December 1995, leaders of 10 countries in South-East Asia — Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam — gathered in Bangkok and signed the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty. The Treaty of Bangkok, a truly South-East Asian treaty, is the first treaty jointly concluded by all 10 countries of the region. The Treaty basically contains three main objectives: the reaffirmation of the 10 countries regarding obligations assumed under the NPT; the guarantee of the right to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes; and the safeguarding of the environment from nuclear waste. The Treaty recognizes and respects the rights of other States, consistent with the Charter of the United Nations and in accordance with international law in general and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 1982 in particular, including respect for freedom of the high seas and rights of innocent passage, archipelagic sea lanes passage or transit passage of ships and aircraft.

According to article 16, the Treaty shall enter into force on the date of the deposit of the seventh instrument of ratification with Thailand, which has been designated as the Depository State. Four weeks ago, on 27 March 1997, Cambodia and Singapore deposited their instrument of ratification and became the seventh and eighth States Parties to the Treaty. Consequently, the Bangkok Treaty entered into force on that day. Earlier, Laos, Myanmar, Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam, Vietnam and Thailand had ratified the Treaty. Arrangements are being made to register the Treaty with the United Nations, pursuant to Article 102 of the United Nations Charter. The Commission will soon be established and convened. It will comprise the Foreign Ministers of States Parties, who will oversee the implementation of the Treaty.

As with other nuclear-weapon-free-zone arrangements, a Protocol is attached to the Bangkok Treaty. The Protocol is open for signature by the five nuclear-weapon States. As stated in the Principles and Objectives for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament adopted at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the NPT, the cooperation of all the nuclear-weapon States and their respect and support for the relevant protocols is necessary for the maximum effectiveness of such nuclear-weapon-free zones.

In this assembly, where disarmament is the issue, I would like to urge the five nuclear-weapon States to endorse the Protocol to the Bangkok Treaty. The intention of the South-East Asian countries was simply to create a legal system to guarantee a politically and environmentally safe, stable and secure surrounding to their peoples. It is our hope that the five nuclear States will join us in contributing towards the strengthening of regional security and the enhancement of international peace and security as a whole.

Allow me to take this opportunity to welcome the initiatives of the five Central Asian States on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. Their efforts will certainly contribute to those of the international community to create a world less at risk from nuclear holocaust. I look forward to the future meeting of this Disarmament Commission in which we hear of a world free of nuclear weapons — soon, I hope. But until then, I wish members all the best; they can always count on our cooperation.

Mr. Pham Quang Vinh (Viet Nam): First may I extend to you, Sir, my delegation's warmest congratulations on your election to the chairmanship of this important Commission. You deserve our full confidence and support.

The United Nations, in our view, has a central and primary responsibility in the sphere of disarmament. In this context, my delegation attaches great importance to the work of the Commission. It is a welcome note for this year that agreement has been reached through extensive consultations to include three important substantive items on the agenda of the Commission. They deserve our careful consideration.

My delegation supports the inclusion on the agenda of the new item entitled "Establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned". We share the conviction that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones contributes greatly to the enhancement of international peace and security. The world has witnessed commendable efforts in this regard. The Treaty of Tlatelolco, establishing the first nuclear-weapon-free zone in the world, will be 30 years old this year. Three others have been established through the Treaties of Rarotonga, Pelindaba and Bangkok. Our analysis and development of the relevant guidelines will benefit from these experiences.

Those regional efforts should be supported. The recognition by the nuclear-weapon States of the nuclear-weapon-free zones is of great importance. The representative of Thailand, the Depositary State of the Bangkok Treaty, has apprised the Commission of the recent important developments related to the Treaty. Now that the Treaty of Bangkok has entered into force, we expect and hope that the current consultations will lead to early signature by the nuclear-weapon States of its relevant Protocol. With Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Pelindaba and Bangkok in place, we have the prospect of a nuclear-weapon-free southern hemisphere. We believe that efforts and measures should be taken to consolidate them.

Viet Nam strongly supports the total elimination of nuclear weapons. In the present political and security environment, greater efforts towards nuclear disarmament should and can be made. While we welcome the reductions undertaken by the nuclear-weapon States of their nuclear arsenals, we also believe that it would be best and is possible speedily to achieve a world totally free from nuclear weapons. In the current strengthened review process of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), it should be ensured that all obligations under the Treaty as well as commitments made in the decisions and resolution adopted in 1995 be upheld.

My delegation supports the early convening of the fourth special session devoted to disarmament. We believe that, with serious consideration and greater effort, we can arrive at a general agreement at the current session of the Commission on the framework for this session and that the preparatory process for the special session can thus begin. The first special session adopted important documents that have contributed greatly to our common cause in the field of disarmament. Since then, the world has undergone dramatic changes and, with the end of the cold war, new opportunities and challenges have emerged. The forthcoming special session should take stock of related developments in the political and security environment, review the implementation of the

recommendations and Programme of Action adopted by the first session and, from that, make further and comprehensive recommendations in the field of disarmament as we approach the twenty-first century. We believe that this will be of great importance to the world as a whole.

The Commission has made significant progress with regard to the question of guidelines on conventional arms, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace. The achievements of the Commission are commendable. We also share the concern over the illicit trade in arms and believe that measures need to be taken to prevent this. We welcome the adoption of the new Protocol to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and efforts should be made to ensure its effectiveness. We should also continue to make the current United Nations Register on arms transfers more effective.

A lot of work remains before us. It is our belief that further results can be achieved through a process of cooperative and collective efforts with a view to arriving at a convergence of views. In my delegation's view, we should continue to work to further strengthen the Commission. We believe that, with your vast knowledge, experience and skill, Mr. Chairman, you will guide our work to a successful outcome. In this common endeavour, my delegation will cooperate fully with you and all delegations.

Organization of work

The Chairman: The Bureau of the Commission held a meeting this morning at which the working timetable for the period 21-25 April was discussed. The timetable, contained in Informal Paper No. 1, has been distributed.

If there are no comments, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt Informal Paper No. 1.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: As I mentioned yesterday, next week's timetable will be decided upon by the Bureau in consultation with the Chairmen of the Working Groups and will be distributed at the meeting of the Committee of the Whole on Monday.

In another matter which I should like to bring to the Commission's attention, Prime Minister Kurt Beck of the German Federal State of Rhineland-Palatinate will visit the United Nations on 28 April 1997 and has asked to be allowed to address the Commission at an informal meeting of this body.

If I hear no objection, I should like to invite the Prime Minister to address the meeting of the Committee of the Whole, which we would schedule for Monday, 28 April, at 11 a.m.

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 11.10 a.m.